

The
MASQUE of
BEAUTY
and the
BEAST

Written by
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PETERSON

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by
Michael Elliot Brill

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FOR KATHERINE HUTCHINSON
My very best friend



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Notes on Staging The Masque of Beauty and the Beast

It's quite possible to mount a production of this play on a bare stage with no scenery, whatsoever. In fact, this is desirable. The action is very cinematic and calls for rapid, sometimes magical, changes of locale. It is, therefore, advisable that the use of large, awkward, and sometimes unreliable and noisy scenic elements be kept minimal or avoided altogether. If a "set" is to be used the suggestion is that it be as simple, elegant and practical as can be managed and whatever levels are employed be effective in varying the physical relationships of the characters while remaining unobtrusive and working equally well in all locales.

The play is called a "Masque" and under this convenient canopy a great many liberties may be taken. Naturally, the more vivid the imagination of the Director the easier it will be to bend conventional stage practices to the needs of the particular production. In respect of directorial prerogative, parenthetical stage direction is given only when it is necessary to clarify some important stage business or make clearer the relationships of the characters. It is not, however, dogma and should be taken with a grain of salt.

Music should lubricate all transitions of locale and may be frequently employed as underscoring for the scenes. The notes which refer to music and sound cues in this script are from the original production.

A word about the five Grotesques. Their Eastern counterparts are the Property Men of the Chinese Theatre. They should be both mysterious and beautiful. Not only are they wonderful "devices" for moving set pieces on and offstage but they can also be used to advantage for the indication of locale. This was done, originally, with the use of large, ornate signs which read, for example, PROLOGUE or BEFORE A TAVERN IN THE TOWN. The Grotesques were employed to carry and display these signs and, several times, they would remain onstage to comment, silently, on the action.

Costumes, props and masks should be as lavish and as opulent as the budget will allow. It is important to single out The Beast in this area. The other characters are easy enough to define but because of the importance of showing the audience the humanizing metamorphosis undergone by The Beast it might be helpful to relate how the situation was handled originally. We first see The Beast in his terrible encounter with The Merchant. Here he should be truly monstrous. The mask should be horned and the expression fierce. The costume should be hairy, the hands made to resemble hooves and some of the body covered with forbidding armor. At this first entrance he should be possessed of a gigantic pair of bat-like wings (which may be operated by two of the Grotesques) and be in constant motion throughout the scene. These wings will play a role in the "masque within the Masque" at The Beast's first encounter with Beauty. This meeting is the next time we see The Beast and here the image of a regal peacock was used, eliminating much of the horror of the first manifestation. The features of the mask were birdlike and the costume very ornamental and elegant.

The narration between the two Beauty and Beast scenes is short but it represents the passage of three months and so it is important to show the Beast's most human manifestation here. A very pastoral look was created, with vines and leaves delicately painted on the doublet and worked into the mask. The last time we see him he is very near death and all the lovely greens had browned. The mask was pitiful and had the look of a miserable puppy about it. The effect was truly touching. The transformation from

Beast to handsome Prince is explained at the appropriate time in the text. Let me refer the Costume Designer to the illustrations Hillary Knight has created for The Golden Book version of Beauty and The Beast. They are inspired.

The play is written in verse. This should not present any difficulties since it was written to be dialogue first and poetry second. The lines are consumately actable and great pains have been taken to avoid metre boredom and foolish phrasing for the sake of scansion and rhyme. However, no script is inviolate and the Author acknowledges the right of the Director to make judicious cuts and alterations to fit the needs of his production.

One final word. The effect of the play upon the audience has proven to be very hypnotic. Whether this is the result of the poetry or enchantment of the story or the desire of the audience for a good old fashioned flight of fancy is unimportant. What is important is that everything be done to heighten and nurture this effect. From the most obvious scenic element to the most insignificant prop great care should be taken and scrupulous attention to detail be paid in order to draw the audience into this world of fantasy and nourish them while they are there.

Running time for the production is approximately one hour and it is recommended that no intermission be taken.

Michael Elliot Brill

The following is a copy of the program of the first performance of *The Masque of Beauty and the Beast* as performed by the Enchanted Theatre Company and presented by the Drama Board of The Bathhouse Theatre, a facility of the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, in 1977.

The Drama Board of The Bathhouse Theatre
presents
The Enchanted Theatre Company
in
THE MASQUE OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Written and Directed
by
MICHAEL BRILL
Produced by
JOHN CHAMBLESS

The Cast
(In order of appearance)

The Narrator.....	Norman R. Newkirk
The Silver Grotesque.....	Harry F. Domek
The Golden Grotesque.....	Robert Haynes
The Burgundy Grotesque.....	Susanna Burney
The Merchant.....	Gary Pierce
The Green Grotesque.....	Susan Segalla
The Brown Grotesque.....	Thomas Harryman
The Bank Solicitor.....	David Clark
The Merchant's Three Daughters:	
Haughtense.....	Rosanne Jurich
Dyspeppsia.....	Deborah Hoover
Beauty.....	Pamela Bridgham
The Beast.....	Marc Corbett Bridgham

The Production Company

Set Design.....	Charles Kading
Costume Design and Construction.....	Marilyn Raichle
Masks and Props Design.....	Clarke Schumacher
Poster, Graphics and Costume Painting.....	Joelle de La Fontaine
Millinery Design.....	Susanna Burney
Jewelry Design.....	Jodelle Stith
Program Cover Design.....	Charles Emerson
Masks Painted By.....	David Hastings
Set Construction.....	Ron Lester
Technical Direction & Lighting Design.....	Bruce Brittingham
Assistant to Mr. Brill.....	Michael Beaudreau
Assistants to Ms. Raichle.....	Richard Castillo
Lisa Chambless, Susanna Burney, Karen Hatcher	
Assistants to Mr. Schumacher.....	Harry F. Domek
Robert Haynes, Lisa Chambless, Thomas Harryman	
Assistant to Mr. Kading.....	Jodelle Stith
Electrician.....	Michael Beaudreau
Sound.....	Clarke Michael Evans
Backstage Running Crew.....	Jim Guilfoil
Lisa Chambless, Jodelle Stith, Charles Hatcher	
Assistant to Mr. Brittingham.....	Sandra Fay
The Drama Board.....	Karalyn Morrison, Chairperson
	Sandra Fay, Secretary/Treasurer

The Cast

(In order of appearance)

The Narrator

The Five Grotesques

The Merchant

The Bank Solicitor

Haughtense

Dyspepsia

Beauty

The Beast (later the Prince)

The Action of the Play

Prologue

Scene One. The Merchant's House in Town

Scene Two. The Farm (three months later)

Scene Three. Before a Tavern in the Town (later that day)

Scene Four. The Forest (later that night)

Scene Five. The Palace of the Beast

Scene Six. The Garden of the Palace (the following day)

Scene Seven. The Farm (immediately following)

Scene Eight. The Palace of the Beast (immediately following)

Scene Nine. The Palace of the Beast (three months later)

Scene Ten. The Farm (immediately following)

Scene Eleven. The Farm (three days later)

Scene Twelve. The Palace of the Beast (immediately following)

Epilogue

(Music cue # 1. Preshow)
(Music cue # 2. Prologue)

NARRATOR

(In moonlight with the stage blanketed in low lying dry ice fog)

Moonlight and a gentle, misty veil.
The perfect setting for a fairytale.
Here, for an hour, you and I will climb
The silken threads of "Once upon a time . . ."
And we will lure you with our conjurations,
If you will lend us your imaginations,
With which to weave fantastic tapestries;
The eye to dazzle and heart to please.

Beat drums and let the trumpets bray,
To herald the commencement of our play.

(Music cue # 3. Entrance of the players. Enter The Merchant, The Bank Solicitor, Haughtense, Dyspeppsia, Beauty and two Grotesques disguised as Assistants to The Bank Solicitor, carrying on a small table and chair. They all freeze.)

NARRATOR

A Merchant, who was wealthy beyond measure
(Whose life was filled with every mundane pleasure)
Came suddenly to ruin, sad to say,
In what seemed but the passing of a day.
Forced to undersell all that he owned,
To pay the Moneylenders what he'd loaned
And lost, he found himself with little more
Than three young daughters and the clothes they wore.

(Narrator exits as action begins)

MERCHANT

You parasite! You leech!

BANK SOLICITOR

Good sir, take care!
Such flattery won't get you anywhere.
You know it might go hard with you in Court
If I should quote those words in my report.

MERCHANT

Shylock!

BANK SOLICITOR

Must I once more remind you,
I'm just an agent of the Court that fined you?
I do not act upon my own behalf
But in the Law's good name.

MERCHANT

Don't make me laugh.
By this you stand to profit handsomely.
You'll have your share of what you squeeze from me.

BANK SOLICITOR

It's true, that for my services, I rate
A portion of the take . . .

BEAUTY, HAUGHTENSE AND DYSPEPPSIA

Oh!

BANK SOLICITOR (*correcting himself*)

The Estate!
It's only fair, as you'll agree, good neighbor,
That I should have some payment for my labor

(*He ogles the necklace that Haughtense wears*)

Well, bless my bankbooks, what have we here?
My word, but that's a striking lavalier!

HAUGHTENSE (*lying*)

It's paste, of course, and hardly worth a thing.

BANK SOLICITOR (*detecting the lie*)

You'd be amazed the price such "paste" can bring.
Let's have the earrings, too. Though awfully small
Some "paste" is better than no "paste" at all.
They're very pretty but it hardly pays
To deal in tacky jewelry, nowadays.
I'm rushed just now, but soon as I am able
I'll send someone to get that chair and table.
Yes. They're the last two items on my list.
Unless you've thought of something I have missed.

MERCHANT

You've got it all. There's nothing left to take.
Now leave my house!

BANK SOLICITOR (*producing a document*)

There must be some mistake.
This was your house, but now, as you can see,
The Court's assigned your house and lands to me.

MERCHANT (*looking over the document*)

Extend my credit. Give me one week more.

BANK SOLICITOR

You've had this same extension twice before.

MERCHANT

Three months ago three ships of mine set sail
From India . . .

BANK SOLICITOR

I know! I've heard this tale.

MERCHANT

They're filled with countless riches from the East.
Each worth the ransom of a king, at least.

BANK SOLICITOR

Give up. Those ships were lost at sea.

MERCHANT

Not so!
They've been detained. They'll come to Port, I know.

BANK SOLICITOR

I'll be delighted, when and if they do,
To sell all your possessions back to you.
But now, dear Sir, I must be on my way.
It's been a pleasure seeing you. Good day!

(The Assistants exit)

It warms my heart and sends a tingle through me
To know you'll always be indebted to me.

(Bank Solicitor exits)

HAUGHTENSE

Ruined!

DYSPEPPSIA

How can we ever hope to face
Our friends after this terrible disgrace?

MERCHANT

What friends? The ones we had when it was sunny?
Fair weather flocks that vanished like our money.

HAUGHTENSE

Those goodly neighbors whom we wined and dined . . .

MERCHANT

Have turned their ears quite deaf, their eyes quite blind
To our misfortune. Hypocrites, the lot!

HAUGHTENSE

They will come 'round again, you'll see.

MERCHANT

What rot!
You're silent, Beauty, while your sisters thunder.

DYSPEPPSIA

No doubt she's overjoyed.

HAUGHTENSE

Well, it's no wonder.
Society and Fashion make no place
For fools, like her, who will not keep the pace!

DYSPEPPSIA

To think that Fate would deal us such a blow.

HAUGHTENSE

Heaven knows what we'll do or where we'll go.

BEAUTY

We have the farm.

HAUGHTENSE AND DYSPEPPSIA

The farm!!

DYSPEPPSIA

You surely joke!

BEAUTY

We must adopt the ways of simple folk.
For now we have to tolerate our lot
And make the best we can of what we've got.

MERCHANT

Beauty is right. We have no other choice.

HAUGHTENSE

And what of us?

DYSPEPPSIA

Are we to have no voice?

MERCHANT (*exploding*)

Dear God! It's hard enough to face this matter
Without a dose of your disgruntled chatter.

HAUGHTENSE

But you must realize that this suggestion
For us, at least, is quite out of the question.
What do we know of chickens, pigs and cows,
Of things like chopping wood and pushing plows?

DYSPEPPSIA

Look at these hands. How long could they endure
The tragedy of shovelling manure?

BEAUTY (*the voice of reason*)

Sisters, I know it will be hard at first.
Until we have our new roles well rehearsed
We'll struggle. Four will have to work as ten
To get that fallow land to bloom again.
But we can do it.

HAUGHTENSE

Oh, you think so eh?

Well I think that your brains have blown away.

I also think that you must be advised

Of several points which you have not surmised.

I won't be made to rise before the sun.

That's something chickens do, and I'm not one.

I won't milk cows, it's vulgar and obscene—

I won't "slop hogs", whatever that might mean—

I won't weave cloth, or sew, or bake the bread—

I won't scrub floors, wash clothes or make a bed.

I've never done such things before, and vow,

I'd rather die than have to do them now.

MERCHANT

You've had your say, permit me to have mine.

This diatribe of yours is assinine.

If I were you I wouldn't take such pride

In a mind so narrow and a mouth so wide.

It's obvious your ego reigns supreme

To spew out selfishness to this extreme.

I've never tanned your bottom, now I rue it,

But tempt me further and I'll hasten to it.

And if I can't pound logic in your head

I will impress the other end instead.

Is that quite clear to both of you?

(Haughtense and Dyspeppsia nod)

I'm glad.

To quarrel with my children makes me sad,

And makes me doubt what I feel in my heart,

That we will pull together, not break apart.

I've several notes to write and then we'll leave.

The less we tarry here the less we'll grieve.

(The Merchant exits followed by Beauty. Dyspeppsia is furious and ready to explode)

HAUGHTENSE *(calming her)*

Say nothing. We will do as we are told.

DYSPEPPSIA *(boiling)*

And let more of this foolishness unfold?

I'd sooner starve than labor for my bread—

Or make some dirty pile of straw my bed—

Wear nothing but potato sacks for clothes—

Have only country bumpkins for my beaux . . .

HAUGHTENSE

Shut up!

DYSPEPPSIA

I won't!

HAUGHTENSE

You will, or else I vow
I'll slap you silly. Listen to me now.
If laboring for bread is what you fear
Beauty will do it. This is her idea.
It won't last long and we'll be rich again.
Our luck is bound to turn. So until then,
Let's bide our time and salve this ugly blister
By making life a Hell for our sweet sister.

(They exit, laughing wickedly as they go. Music cue # 4 — scene change to THE FARM. The Grotesques enter and remove the remaining chair and table. The Narrator enters with them to oversee all. The Music covers the scene change and narration)

NARRATOR

Time passes very quickly on our stage,
But three months does not mitigate the rage
And spite of those two harpies, whom we'll see
Are just as hateful as they used to be.
Their fall from worldly wealth to deepest debt
Has filled them with resentment and regret.
But they've not given up, as you will see,
The smallest part of Pride or Vanity.
Our Beauty has become her sisters' slave,
Bearing it all she lets them rant and rave
And order her about at every turn,
Having none other than this one concern—
To ease the burdens of her father's heart
And see the sorrows of his soul depart.

(music fades)

The sisters now proclaim with every breath . . .

(Narrator exits as sisters enter)

HAUGHTENSE *(entering in farm clothes)*

This life of poverty bores me to death!

DYSPEPPSIA *(following just behind)*

I'd scream if I'd the energy to do it.

God grant me strength this day to get me through it.

HAUGHTENSE *(caressing her cheek)*

The peachy soft complexion I once bore . . .

DYSPEPPSIA

A miracle is needed to restore!

HAUGHTENSE

What?!

DYSPEPPSIA *(indicating her hands)*

These which once were soft as Persian silk . . .

HAUGHTENSE

Now have a texture more like curdled milk!

DYSPEPPSIA

Our witless sister has a soul so base
She actually enjoys this wretched place.

HAUGHTENSE

Well, she can have it. I, for one, don't share
Her passion for this foul country air.

(Sound cue # 5 COW MOOING)

It reeks of cows and pigs and worse.

DYSPEPPSIA

Quite so.
How any nose can bear it I don't know.

HAUGHTENSE

She bears it.

DYSPEPPSIA

Yes. And, though I hate to say,
Her beauty grows with every passing day.

HAUGHTENSE *(going after her)*

That sort of talk will set my claws in you.

DYSPEPPSIA

I know it's ugly but you know it's true!

(she sees Beauty approaching)

She's coming now . . .

HAUGHTENSE

Remember not to speak.
We vowed no discourse with her for a week.

BEAUTY *(entering and very excited)*

Father's received word from the Public Court—
One of his ships, long lost, has come to Port.

HAUGHTENSE AND DYSPEPPSIA

What's that?

DYSPEPPSIA

Dear God! We're saved!

HAUGHTENSE

This can't be true.

MERCHANT *(entering and brandishing a letter)*

It is. Our life of poverty is through.

You see, Fate smiles upon us once again

And prophesies that very sweet refrain

For which we've hoped. When I return from town,

With gems and gold my purses weighted down,

We'll celebrate! Now, name what I'm to buy

And bring to be the darling of each eye.

DYSPEPPSIA

A brocade dress!

HAUGHTENSE

A jewelled fan!

MERCHANT

And you,

My Beauty, say you will have something too.

BEAUTY

I want for nothing but your safe return

And have no need for what my sisters yearn.

MERCHANT

My precious angel, you have been to me

A joy that's greater far than gold could be.

Do not deny your father such a pleasure

As laying at your feet some special treasure.

HAUGHTENSE *(taking Beauty aside)*

You wicked girl, you'll break our father's heart . . .

DYSPEPPSIA

Name something or he never will depart.

BEAUTY

A rose, dear father. None grow hereabout.

MERCHANT, HAUGHTENSE AND DYSPEPPSIA

A rose!?

MERCHANT

So shall it be. Come. See me out.

(as they exit Music cue # 6 scene change to "BEFORE A TAVERN IN THE TOWN".)

NARRATOR *(entering)*

Not knowing Fate has changed her course once more

To make his burdens greater than before,

The Merchant journeys through the day to town,

Arriving as the sun is going down.

(music fades as the Bank Solicitor enters)

He meets The Bank Solicitor to find . . . (he exits)

MERCHANT (*as if they'd been long in talking*)
Reason is dead and Justice surely blind!

BANK SOLICITOR

So sorry! There was little I could do,
Your creditors moved twice as fast as you.
Before your ship could dock, officially,
They'd hired boats to take them out to sea.
Knowing your ship and all that there was in it
They couldn't bear to waste one precious minute
In taking what they felt belonged to them.
A dirty, but effective, stratagem.
In one hour's time they had been everywhere.
And like a plague of locust stripped you bare.
Your ship stands empty now and it's for sale.
The price it brings may keep you out of jail.

MERCHANT

But I'd pinned all my hopes upon this day.

BANK SOLICITOR

Of course it's hard to see them crushed this way.
I'm sure you thought your fortune would be made,
But, as it is, at least your debts are paid.

MERCHANT

So there is nothing left?

BANK SOLICITOR

Perhaps tomorrow
Another ship may dock to ease this sorrow.

MERCHANT

If you extend my credit until then
I'm sure I could get on my feet again.

BANK SOLICITOR

I don't think you completely comprehend—
Your credit's nonexistent now, my friend.

MERCHANT

I ask for help. How can you be so cold?

BANK SOLICITOR (*starting to exit*)

"God helps those who help themselves", I'm told

MERCHANT (*grabbing him*)

And this is your reply to my request,
A platitude that's second rate at best.
Don't bandy words with me you thieving toad.
I wouldn't want my temper to explode
And dent that patronizing smile you flash.
Take care or else I may do something rash.

BANK SOLICITOR

Sir, if these rabid outbursts do not cease
I will be forced to summon the police.
What good will temper do you anyhow?
The milk is spilt, there's no use crying now
Go home.

MERCHANT

It's night. I'll lose my way, I know.

BANK SOLICITOR (*leaving*)

Tomorrow.

MERCHANT

There's no place for me to go
Without a coin to put down for a bed.

BANK SOLICITOR

Then take your chances travelling home, instead.

MERCHANT (*desperate*)

Give me a coin, I beg you!

BANK SOLICITOR

Not a penny.

MERCHANT

My curse on you!

BANK SOLICITOR (*laughing at him*)

Good sir, it's one of many.
You see, when you're a simple Bank Solicitor
You get more curses than the Grand Inquisitor.

MERCHANT

The forest's filled with wolves. It's cold. I'll die!

BANK SOLICITOR

In that case . . . let me say a last goodbye.

MERCHANT

What shall I do?

BANK SOLICITOR

I would suggest you pray.
Goodnight! I think there's nothing more to say.

(Music cue # 7 transition to the forest. The Merchant is left alone on stage. The Narrator enters, watching him, and as he speaks there come from the various entrances and levels about the stage the four Grotesques. Each Grotesque carries two branches of a gnarled tree. They move slowly and surround the Merchant. The effect should be that of the forest closing in about the Merchant, ominously.)

NARRATOR

There's no recourse. The Merchant takes his chance.
He steels himself but soon his nerve recants.
With midnight's velvet blanket now unrolled,
His body gripped with hunger and the cold,
He's lost his way, and wanders without knowing
How far he's come or which way he is going.
Then, suddenly, he sees a distant light
Which cuts, knife-like, through the black of night.

(The effect of this light can be managed in many ways. In the original production the Narrator carried a large staff which was surmounted by a ball of simulated stained glass. At this point in the narration he threw a concealed switch in the staff and the ball was startlingly illuminated.)

(Music cue #8 The Journey through the forest. A fifth Grotesque takes the staff from the Narrator. The Narrator exits. The Grotesque with the staff uses it to attract the Merchant who follows the light through the ever shifting maze created by the other four Grotesques carrying the branches. One by one the Grotesques leave the stage, the one carrying the ball of light is last. A shift in the lighting here indicates the change of scene to THE PALACE OF THE BEAST. Immediately a Grotesque enters with an ornately carved throne chair. It is offered to the Merchant and left on stage. This Grotesque exits. A second Grotesque then brings on the "fire". This was managed with the use of brilliantly colored silk scarves which when rapidly flipped up and down in the hands of the Grotesque produces the effect of jumping flames. This Grotesque kneels in a position downstage of the Merchant, who warms his hands at the leaping flames. Two Grotesques appear bearing a large table filled with a sumptuous repast. This they bring before the Merchant and kneel to become the ornate legs of the table. The Merchant is dubious. He takes a glass of wine from the table. He sips. It tastes wonderful. He drinks deeply. All this time the Narrator, who has entered to supervise this banquet, has been miming the playing of a violin and this music has filled the scene. The Merchant grows drowsy. The fire dies. The table is removed. The Grotesques and Narrator exit. The Merchant sleeps in his chair. The music fades. Sunlight cascades into the room.)

(Music cue # 9)

(The Merchant wakes abruptly.)

MERCHANT *(voice over on tape)*

For certain this was not a dream I had.
It was quite real or I have gone quite mad.

(speaking out)

Who's there? Can I be heard by any ear?
I wish to thank my Host if he can hear.

(voice over again)

No answer. Not a whisper in the air.

MERCHANT

(speaking out)

Hello! Someone? Is anybody there?

(It's no use. He moves from The Palace into THE GARDEN OF THE PALACE. This is indicated with a change of lights and, perhaps, another, Grotesque — held sign. Suddenly, one of the other Grotesques appears. He wears a cape which is covered with roses and vines. One of these roses will be removable. The Grotesque moves about the stage as the Merchant watches, fascinated. Finally, the Grotesque kneels before the Merchant.)

BEAUTY *(her voice on tape)*

A rose, dear father. None grow here about.

MERCHANT

At least my Beauty shall not do without.

(He plucks a rose from the cape. Music cue # 10 the entrance of The Beast. A great cacophony and terrifying clamor arise. The Grotesque exits. The Beast enters in a rage. The Merchant tries to flee but is frozen to the spot by The Beast's gesture.)

BEAST

Stand still and contemplate that which you hold.
That which I treasure more than gems or gold.
I save your life and now you steal from me!
Is this your payment for my charity?

MERCHANT *(terrified)*

My Lord, have mercy, I meant no offense.
Nor would I slight your great benevolence.
I beg forgiveness.

BEAST

Save your flatteries.
I am not moved by empty obsequies.

MERCHANT

One of my daughters, youngest of the three
Requested this and only this of me
One rose. One little rose . . .

BEAST

I'll set you free
If one comes in your place, and willingly!

MERCHANT

I . . .

BEAST

Swear you'll return before the week is dead,
Or send one of your daughters in your stead.

MERCHANT

The forfeit is too great to ask.

BEAST

Beware!
Your life is over if you do not swear.

MERCHANT

I have no choice. I swear.

BEAST

I know your thought.
You plan to bargain with me while you're caught,
And acquiesce to anything I say,
Then break your vow when safely far away.
But I have power greater than you know.
My curse will touch you anywhere you go.
In seven days, if you do not comply
With what you've sworn, you will most surely die . . .
And die most horribly.

MERCHANT

It can't be true.
But I am dead no matter what I do.

BEAST

You have a choice.

MERCHANT

No. I could never send
A child of mine to meet with such an end.

BEAST

Go now!

MERCHANT

Will I be guided, as before,
By that same power which led me to your door?

BEAST

Take up that rose. Inhale its scent and be
Again at home, transported instantly.
In one week crush the petals in your hand
And here, before me, once again you'll stand.

*(Music cue # 11 Exit of the Beast. The Beast is gone as suddenly
and as magically as he appeared. The Merchant is left alone. He
takes up the rose.)*

MERCHANT *(staring at the rose)*

My scarlet executioner. How cruel
That Fate should use such beauty as a tool.

(He inhales the scent of the rose. Music cue # 12 the Merchant's transported back to THE FARM. His daughters enter and move to him in slow motion. The music fades.)

MERCHANT *(as if they've been long in conversation)*

You've heard my story. Now you know the worst.
Was ever man so innocently cursed?

BEAUTY

It can't be true.

MERCHANT

The very words I used.

HAUGHTENSE

Well, I confess, I'm just a bit confused.

MERCHANT

Confused?

HAUGHTENSE

He seems a stupid Beast, to me.
To have you there and then to set you free . . .

DYSPEPPSIA

He claims to have some power over you . . .

HAUGHTENSE

Yes! How can you be certain this is true?

MERCHANT

Because I saw such things as cannot be,
And know his powers defy reality.
His words were thunder and his eyes ablaze
With hate, each time he fixed me in his gaze.
Oh, it was true! Too true! And when he said
If I did not return I would be dead
I never doubted it. To hear him speak
The blood runs icy and the knees grow weak.

HAUGHTENSE

Why can't we organize, within the town,
A band of men to hunt this monster down.
To storm his castle, kill him and divide
The countless treasures that you saw inside?

DYSPEPPSIA

We could be rich!

MERCHANT

His power's much too great
For such a plan.

DYSPEPPSIA

Then we must sit and wait
For seven days to come and go and be
Content with resultant tragedy.

BEAUTY

Father . . .

HAUGHTENSE (*interrupting*)

You cannot go. There's still some chance
One of your ships may yet return to France.

(They stare at her in disbelief)

I mean . . . to sacrifice yourself is quite absurd
Without repaying those debts you have incurred.
You're honour bound to live.

BEAUTY

Yes. Let me go.
It's my fault this has happened.

DYSPEPPSIA

As we know!
But you should be contented, I suppose,
No matter what the price you've got your rose!

MERCHANT (*at his wits end*)

Enough! In one week's time I crush that flower.
We'll speak no more of this until that hour.

(He looks at all three then exits)

HAUGHTENSE (*sadistically*)

Is it some odd reflection which I spy
Or can a tear have trickled from your eye?
Well, weep away and may each droplet etch
A sorrow in your heart, ungrateful wretch.
You've brought about the forfeit of his life
As sure as if you'd stabbed him with a knife!

BEAUTY

Oh, no!

HAUGHTENSE

Oh, yes!!

DYSPEPPSIA

Your wicked vanity
Has been the cause of all this misery!

HAUGHTENSE

You had to have that rose, well take your treasure—
And may it give you every kind of pleasure.

(The sisters exit. Beauty breaks down, sobbing. After a moment she recovers. Music cue # 13 Beauty's Prayer. She sees the rose lying on the ground. She moves to it and picks it up. The stage grows dark with the exception of a pinspot on her.)

BEAUTY

Dear God, you are the Father of my soul.
In all this life I have no greater goal
Than pleasing you and being worthy of
Your endless bounty and eternal love.
And, as You have ordained, within my heart,
My earthly father has his rightful part.
My love for him is second unto You.
It is this love which prompts what I must do.
Father in Heaven I pray You will forgive
The forfeit of my life that he may live.

(Beauty presses the rose to her heart. Music Cue # 14 transportation to THE PALACE. This is followed by Music cue # 15 The Masque within The Masque. The following is optional depending on the production budget and the need of the Director to show some reason for the Prince having been turned into the Beast in the first place.

THE MASQUE WITHIN THE MASQUE

Beauty is now in The Palace of The Beast and she knows it. At first she's frightened, then curious. Suddenly, two of the Grotesques enter. They carry a large gilded and bejewelled chest with them. This chest they place downstage. Graciously they bow to Beauty, who watches mystified, and exits. They return almost immediately with a second chest. It is of the same size, however, it is of wood. Perhaps carved. Perhaps inlaid. This chest is placed on the opposite side of the stage. The Grotesques then gesture to the upstage right and left entrances. From these entrances come two more Grotesques. Each carries one of the gigantic bat wings used in the first entrance of The Beast. They move to centerstage and maneuver the wings to hide the entrance of the "Masque Prince" from the audience. This character is one of the Grotesques who is now dressed as a Prince. The mask he wears should bear a striking resemblance to The Prince at the end of the play. This mask is golden and immobile. It is important that the costume worn by this "Masque Prince" in some way coordinate with the costume of The Beast as we will soon see him, so that the audience will make the necessary connection between the two. The wings part to reveal this "Prince". He is reaching out. The pair of Grotesques who brought in the chests now hold one key each. Both keys are overlarge. One is very ornate the other is rather plain. They hold the keys up to the "Prince". He must make a choice between the two. The choice is obviously very difficult. Finally he chooses the ornate key. The plain key is brought to the wooden chest, by the Grotesque, and symbolically unlocked then opened. Inside glitter jewels, gold and shimmering treasure. The chest is then closed. All onstage focus on the "Prince". He looks at the key in his hand. He crosses to the ornate chest. He touches the key to the chest.

The Grotesques open it. There is a brilliant flash of light (and perhaps smoke) and, unseen by the audience, the "Prince" reaches down into the chest and pulls from it an ugly shroud with which he covers himself. It should appear to the audience that this shroud has leapt from the chest to ensnare him. He struggles. He moves back to the wings. They encase him. The plain chest is removed. The wings part to reveal The Beast who has exchanged places with the "Prince". The Grotesques with the wings exit. Beauty and The Beast are alone onstage. He studies her.)

BEAST

You are called Beauty?

BEAUTY

Yes.

BEAST

And rightly so.

My name is Death, as you already know.

(pause)

You are afraid?

BEAUTY

Yes. What else could I be,

Knowing that Death plays cat and mouse with me?

BEAST

You might pretend you're braver than you are.

BEAUTY

I don't think that would get me very far.

And why postpone inevitable Fate?

I'm quite prepared to enter Heaven's gate.

BEAST

If you are bound for Heaven it might be well

To linger here awhile and sample Hell.

No soul to Heaven may rightfully aspire

Without first tasting the Infernal Fire.

BEAUTY *(turning from him)*

Are you the Devil, then?

BEAST *(enraged)*

Look on my face.

You think it bears the touch of Heaven's Grace?

You think that God ordained His world increased,

In measure, by a stupid, ugly Beast?

BEAUTY *(softly)*

Forgive me.

BEAST

These are things you should not hear.
And cannot comprehend at all, I fear.

(pause)

You find me hideous to look upon?

BEAUTY

I cannot lie.

BEAST

You wish me to be gone?

BEAUTY

I cannot say.

BEAST

Beauty, do not pretend
This ugliness of mine does not offend.

BEAUTY

Others are so much uglier than you,
Concealing it, as you're unable to.
They wear a mask of beauty, which can hide
An ugliness that's buried deep inside.
And that is worse.

BEAST

Your blush must surely be
The outward show of inner honesty.

(pause)

May I come closer?

BEAUTY

You are master here.

BEAST

Sometimes some things are not as they appear
I am not what I seem.

BEAUTY

I think you show
A surface much unlike what lies below.
You bear great nobility and pride.
Such virtues are impossible to hide.

BEAST

I do not have great words within my head
To thank you for these kind things you have said.
Not only am I ugly, I lack wit.

BEAUTY

You've wit enough in recognizing it.
True wisdom often travels in . . . disguise
And only fools will boast that they are wise.

BEAST *(after a pause)*

You are less fearful of me now.

BEAUTY

A bit.

Although I'm trembling still, I must admit.

BEAST

If I erased this terror you have of me
Might it be possible for you to love me?

BEAUTY *(horried, yet filled with pity)*

I don't know how to answer.

BEAST *(Forcefully)*

Be my wife.

BEAUTY *(shocked)*

I couldn't. Even if it meant my life.

(Long pause while The Beast studies her)

BEAST

Your life is safe. No harm will touch you here
And Time may temper your prodigious fear.

(he is exiting)

Tomorrow, when you dine, I'll come again
Look not for my appearance until then.

(He is gone. Beauty has watched him depart. Suddenly, one of the Grotesques enters. He indicates that Beauty should follow him and they both exit slowly. Music cue # 15 — narration. The Narrator enters and watches them leave.)

NARRATOR

The Beast's repulsive form offends her eye,
Yet Beauty's drawn to him and knows not why.
Her heart is heavy, but she's not afraid
To honour the decision she has made
To take her father's place, and willingly
Accept her fate . . . whatever that might be.
The lonely hours begin to multiply
As solitary days drift slowly by.
At night her sleep is filled with tortured dreams,
And often shattered by inhuman screams.
By day she wanders through the palace halls
Where marbled spectres peer from gilded walls

Whose shadows, candle cast, upon the floors
Stretch quivering fingers to the chamber doors . . .
Which unseen hands unlatch and open wide
As if imploring her to step inside.
And, stepping through the portals, Beauty sees
Endless delights and countless mysteries.
Radiant splendors, elegance untold—
A multitude of wonders to behold.
A hundred rooms and still a hundred more,
With each more dazzling than the one before.
But dreadful silence underlines a gloom
Which saturates the air in every room
And fills her with intangible despair
From which she finds no respite . . . anywhere.

Three months have passed with very little changed,
But destinies will soon be rearranged.

(The Narrator gestures and Beauty enters. She is exquisitely dressed in a gown of roses and softness. The Narrator exits. Music cue # 16 Beauty's Reverie begins. She seems almost in a daze as she moves further onstage. Two Grotesques enter bearing a table laden with exotic foods, golden candelabrum and one place setting of gold. Beauty does not seem to notice them. They depart with the table. Far away, it seems, a clock chimes the hour of nine. The Beast enters, in shadow. She senses his presence.)

BEAUTY *(warmly)*
How late you are.

BEAST *(still in shadow)*
Thank you for noticing.
I hope you are content with everything.

BEAUTY
I have much more than what I need to live
You are too generous in what you give.

(pause)

You need not linger where there is no light
For fear that I will tremble at your sight.

BEAST *(coming, slowly, from the dark)*
These shadows are the cloak I utilize
To shield me from the pity in your eyes
Which burns my soul.

BEAUTY
I will not cause you pain
Or look into your eyes, if you remain.

BEAST
Our moonlit ritual each night at nine
Abates your terror of this form of mine?

BEAUTY

Your gentle nature has dispelled my fear
So that I am at ease when you are near.
And now, I think, that with my terror gone
You are not frightening to look upon.

BEAST *(after a pause)*

And do you find your . . . gilded prison palls?

BEAUTY

I'm prisoner to what my heart recalls.

BEAST *(mesmerizing her with a gesture)*

I've power to erase your memories
And bend you to my will if I should please

BEAUTY *(succumbing)*

Yes. You could dull my mind with sorcery.
But would my heart be charmed that easily?
And if it could then why have you delayed
This long in using magic as an aid
To gain your ends.

BEAST *(releasing her from the spell)*

I have no power to take
The gift of . . . love . . . which you must freely make.
Of all that I survey you are the treasure
Which lifts my heart and gives me greatest pleasure.

(He gestures and one of the Grotesques appears with a small jewel box. This he brings to The Beast who opens it and removes from it a gorgeous diamond necklace. The Grotesque exits.)

I would be honoured if you deigned to take
This gift my heart has prompted me to make.

(Beauty allows him to place the necklace about her throat.)

All that I have is yours. What you desire,
You know, I would move mountains to acquire.

BEAUTY

I only have one wish.

BEAST

What is it, then?

BEAUTY

That I might see my father once again.

(The Beast is troubled by her plaintive wish. Music cue # 17 The Magic Mirror. He gestures and two Grotesques appear. They carry two sections of the magic mirror. This is an ornate frame cut in two sections with either mylar or scrim for the glass itself. This they set

up before Beauty. Once the mirror is assembled the Merchant, unseen by the audience, enters and seats himself at a small farm table behind it.)

THE VOICE OF THE MIRROR *(recorded)*

Beauty, I am your mirror, here into
Reflect your wish. I will reflect for you.

(Beauty approaches the mirror. The Merchant is illuminated.)

MERCHANT *(voice over/actor lipsyncs)*

My dearest child the sorrow of your loss
Has broke my heart and filled me with remorse
If Heaven can hear my wish it is that I
Might see my child once more before I die.

(The light on the Merchant fades.)

BEAUTY *(frantically)*

I must go to him.

BEAST

No! It cannot be.

BEAUTY *(kneeling at his feet)*

I beg you grant this one request for me.

BEAST

Beauty, get up. You know not what you do!
It's I who should be on my knees to you.

BEAUTY *(sobbing)*

I promise to return.

BEAST

You must not weep
Or make a promise which you will not keep.

BEAUTY

I will!

BEAST

You can't.

BEAUTY

I could not, willingly,
Betray the trust that you have given me.

BEAST

The Will is subject to the whim of Fate
Whose hand we do not dare anticipate.
And, once more, in a father's arms embraced
Your memories of me would be erased.
You will forget your prison and the heart
Condemned to loneliness when you depart.

BEAUTY

But everything is subject to your Will.
At your command the raging winds are still.
And if you say "The Sun should cease to glow"
Your power is great enough to make it so.

BEAST

All of the power I possess will fade
If you should fail to keep the vow you've made.
For Time is blind to promises forgot
And Death will come to me if you do not.

BEAUTY (*lovingly*)

I know the sorrow of your loneliness.
I know your torment, which is measureless.
I know your heart would break if I should go
And not return to you. All this I know.
And knowing that my loss would mean your death
Could I deceive you now and still draw breath?

BEAST (*falls, sobbing, before her*)

Forgive me, Beauty.

BEAUTY

Let those gentle tears
Dissolve all doubt of me and drown all fears.

(Music cue # 17 Beauty's return to The Farm) Gently, Beauty helps the Beast to his feet. The lights begin to change. In slow motion the Grotesques remove the mirror leaving the Merchant asleep at his table. The Jewelled chest is removed and the Beast withdraws into the shadows. He does however, remain on stage until Beauty embraces her father, after which he exits.)

MERCHANT (*sensing her presence, looks up*)

I must be dreaming, or some sorcery
Fashions this apparition that I see.
If you be spirit, in God's name depart,
And come no more to trouble my poor heart

BEAUTY

This is no spectre which your eyes perceive
But that devoted child for which you grieve
Who lives, and loves her father.

MERCHANT (*overjoyed. Embracing her.*)

God be praised!
I don't know what to say. I am amazed.
When I discovered what you'd done my soul
Was plunged into a dark and dismal hole
From which no word of comfort lifted me
Or could assuage my great despondency.

BEAUTY

Forgive me, father. I would sooner die
Than bring one tear of sorrow to your eye.

MERCHANT

These are the tears of joy which you evoke.
Your presence mends the heart your loss had broke.
We'd given you up, my love, for lost at least.
How did you manage to escape the Beast?
I wouldn't think he could be so unwise
To ever leave unguarded such a prize.

BEAUTY

Father I . . .

(From offstage we hear the shriek of a terrified Dyspeppsia.)

DYSPEPPSIA.

Help!

(She enters, fleeing from Haughtense who pursues her with a broom and blood in her eyes. Haughtense's costume is covered with mud. The result, we should assume, of some accident caused by Dyspeppsia.)

HAUGHTENSE *(chasing her)*

You clumsy simpleton!

DYSPEPPSIA

Help!! Help!!

HAUGHTENSE

You lazy slut! I am undone!
I'll knock some brains into that head, you clod!

DYSPEPPSIA

Have mercy on me, sister.

HAUGHTENSE *(suddenly seeing Beauty)*

Oh, my God!!

MERCHANT

This is no ghost. Our Beauty has come back.

(Haughtense drops the broom and hits Dyspeppsia with it.)

DYSPEPPSIA

Be careful with that broom. You maniac!

HAUGHTENSE *(regaining her composure)*

Well, this is quite a jolt, I must admit.
My head is spinning. I think I should sit.

MERCHANT

Do you not think our Beauty's looking well?

HAUGHTENSE

Why, yes. You'd hardly guess she'd been through Hell.

(To Beauty)

You look so . . . different.

(To Dyspeppsia)

Wouldn't you agree?

DYSPEPPSIA *(drooling)*

My God! That dress, and all that jewelry.

I thought you were a Princess come to call.

HAUGHTENSE *(snidely)*

How nice it's just dear sister after all.

DYSPEPPSIA *(eyeing the necklace)*

Are those real diamonds?

BEAUTY

Yes. I think they are.

HAUGHTENSE

A present from the Beast?

BEAUTY

Yes.

HAUGHTENSE

How bizarre!

DYSPEPPSIA *(still drooling)*

It's gorgeous.

BEAUTY

Here. It will look well on you.

DYSPEPPSIA

On me!? Why yes! That's really very true.

(She attempts to remove the necklace from Beauty and badly burns her hands touching it.)

My hands were filled with fire.

MERCHANT *(comforting her)*

I might have known.

Beauty, these jewels were meant for you alone.

A souvenir of nightmares past and dead.

But how did you escape? You have not said.

BEAUTY

Father

MERCHANT

You have such troubled eyes. What is it?

BEAUTY

The Beast has freed me only for a visit.
I must return in three days time, or he
Will perish, broken hearted.

DYSPEPPSIA

Now I see.
This monster loves you.

BEAUTY

Yes.

MERCHANT

And how say you?
It cannot be that you could love him too.

(Beauty makes no reply)

HAUGHTENSE *(to herself and us.)*

Hmmm.

DYSPEPPSIA *(aside to Haughtense)*

It's obvious. She has been hypnotized.

HAUGHTENSE *(quietly to Dyspeppsia)*

Some plan to save her soul must be devised.

(To Merchant)

Father, may we retire to change our clothes?
These filthy rags offend the eye.

DYSPEPPSIA

And nose.

MERCHANT

Of course.

HAUGHTENSE *(getting in two cents worth of spite)*

I hope your stomach will be able
To tolerate the limit of our table.
I'm sure you'll find it novel being fed
On rancid gruel and moldy crusts of bread.

MERCHANT *(trying to dismiss her)*

I think you've said enough, Haughtense.

HAUGHTENSE

Have I?
There's so much more I'd love to say.

MERCHANT

Don't try.

You'll have your chance again. Now, both of you
I'm sure have chores which need attending to.

(Haughtense and Dyspeppsia glare at Beauty, curtsy to the Merchant rather mechanically and exit.)

Now, Beauty, let me gaze at you awhile
And deeply drink the tonic of your smile.
I see that troubled look again. Don't fear.
What Haughtense said was just a bit severe.
We have more than enough to eat and drink.
It's not as bad as she would have you think.

(Pause. They embrace again.)

My child, I'm curious to know one thing . . .
Did you not find the Beast was frightening?

BEAUTY

At first he terrified me with his look,
So fierce that every fibre in me shook.
But now his eyes appear so sad and deep
I have to turn away sometimes . . . or weep.

MERCHANT

Perhaps you turn away from the reflection
Of what might prove to be your own affection.

(They both consider this for a beat.)

He treats you well?

BEAUTY

Oh, yes! It pleases him
That he can satisfy my every whim.
He asks so little in return, of me.
His only payment is my company.
In this he finds some respite from his curse.
Yet every day his agony seems worse.
A constant struggle rages in his breast —
Two elements at war which never rest.

MERCHANT

He's cursed. There's very little you can do
To ease such suffering.

BEAUTY

That may be true.
But if I stay with him, perhaps I could
Make him forget his ugliness.

(she weeps)

MERCHANT

You are too good.
I find these tears you shed, for him, to be
A high price, Beauty, for such charity.

(He reaches to brush a tear from her cheek)

My God! Your tears begin to crystallize
And turn to diamonds right before my eyes.

BEAUTY

They are a gift from him. Now you are free
To leave the prison of your poverty.

MERCHANT

I don't know what to say.

BEAUTY

Say nothing then.

MERCHANT *(overcome with emotion)*

I will retire now. We'll speak again.
We have so little time. Three days will be,
Like three short minutes, not enough for me.

(The Merchant exits. Beauty watches him go and then she too exits, in the opposite direction. As she does the Narrator enters.)

NARRATOR

A father with his daughter reconciled.
Tears into diamonds magically beguiled.
Such happiness, in stories of this kind,
Is short of life as you will shortly find,

(He gestures and immediately two Grotesques appear. Music cue # 18 the denouement. The Grotesques instantly remove the small farm table and chair.)

For even as I speak these words to you
Evil with evil makes a rendezvous.
The smoldering fires of envy flame once more
Rekindled even brighter than before.
Now, nothing, short of murder, will sedate
Two jealous sisters filled with searing hate—
Racking their wicked brains to find some way
To force poor Beauty to extend her stay.
Hoping, at best, to kill the loving Beast.
Knowing that Beauty will die of guilt, at least—
Now this is evil in the Gothic sense
Which promises some ghastly consequence.
Three days have passed. Now Beauty must depart—
Or break her promise and the poor Beast's heart.

(The Narrator exits as the two sisters enter.)

HAUGHTENSE (*as she enters*)
I'm so infuriated I could spit!

DYSPEPPSIA (*trying to soften her sister's rage*)
She looks a little tired, you must admit.

HAUGHTENSE (*wickedly*)
The weight of all those diamonds exhaust her.
I'd love to know exactly what they cost her.
How dare she seem so happy while we slave
Like dogs and struggle to an early grave?

DYSPEPPSIA (*changing the subject*)
You said you had a plan.

HAUGHTENSE
And so I do.
You brought that onion as I told you to?

DYSPEPPSIA (*producing the onion*)
I did. But why we need it isn't clear.

HAUGHTENSE (*playing with the onion*)
It will provide the necessary tear.
We'll rub our eyes with this.

DYSPEPPSIA
Have you gone mad?
She'll smell it. This idea is very bad.

HAUGHTENSE (*persuading her*)
If we can touch her heart with clever lying
She won't connect the onion with our crying.

DYSPEPPSIA (*whining*)
You know the smell of onions makes me sneeze.

HAUGHTENSE (*losing her temper*)
We have to keep her here, don't we?

DYSPEPPSIA (*still whining*)
Oh, please!

HAUGHTENSE
If we prevent her leaving here today
The Beast will die and she will have to stay.
Then life will be the way it was once more.

DYSPEPPSIA (*catching on, finally*)
She'll do the work?

HAUGHTENSE
Exactly as before.

DYSPEPPSIA *(with great gusto)*
Give me the onion!

HAUGHTENSE
How well can you cry?

(Dyspeppsia attempts to cry. The result is comical.)

That's it?

DYSPEPPSIA
I can't do any better.

HAUGHTENSE
Try.

(She sees Beauty approaching from offstage.)

Do as I do and copy what I say.
We have to melt her heart to make her stay.

(Beauty enters. Haughtense rushes to her. In tears.)

HAUGHTENSE
Oh, Beauty, do not fly from us again
And subject loving sisters to such pain
As that your absence brings.

DYSPEPPSIA
We'll do
Most anything to keep you here. *(Sneezing)* Ah-choo!

BEAUTY *(confused)*
The Beast . . . I promised . . . This would break his heart.

DYSPEPPSIA *(laying it on)*
But *we* will die of grief if you depart.

HAUGHTENSE
And if the feelings of the Beast are true
He won't mind waiting one more day . . . or two.

DYSPEPPSIA *(with a tear)*
Just one more day.

BEAUTY
Don't tempt me with a tear.

HAUGHTENSE *(always resourceful)*
It's not for us, but father that we fear.
His health diminishes with every day.

DYSPEPPSIA
And grows much worse when you are far away.

HAUGHTENSE

Of course he seems strong, but I believe
That he will surely die if you should leave.

DYSPEPPSIA (*really laying it on*)

Oh, Beauty! Beauty! I feel such pain inside.

HAUGHTENSE

There's no consoling her. God knows I've tried.

BEAUTY

The Beast said *he* would die.

HAUGHTENSE

That's just a ruse
That heartsick lovers very often use.

BEAUTY (*torn*)

He would not lie to me.

HAUGHTENSE

Can you be sure?

BEAUTY

He needs me and this need is very pure.

DYSPEPPSIA

It wasn't till you left we really knew
How much the two of *us* have needed you.

BEAUTY

I am so blind. I've never been aware
Of this affection for me which you share.

HAUGHTENSE

We love you, Beauty.

(*Aside to Dyspeppsia*)

Just a little more
And we shall have her sobbing on the floor.

(*Again to Beauty*)

Oh, sister, for our sakes and father's too,
In Heaven's name consider what you do.
If you can shun the promptings of your heart,
Which tell you we will die if you depart,—
If you can cast aside a daughter's duty
And truly think of no one else but Beauty,—
If you can turn deaf ears to what's been said
(Knowing the Wrath of God will strike you dead)
If you can do all this and feel no shame,
Abandon us. We'll love you just the same.

(Haughtense and Dyspepsia exit, weeping. Beauty is left alone onstage. She is fraught with indecision. Music cue # 19 the messenger. The lights dim, slightly. One of the Grotesques enters. It wears the rose garden cape which is now covered with the same shroud that engulfed the "Prince" in the Masque within the Masque. The Grotesque slowly approaches Beauty. She instinctively realizes what the apparition means. The Beast is dying. The Grotesque kneels and holds a withered rose out to Beauty. Beauty takes the rose.)

BEAUTY

Oh, no!

(She clutches the rose to her breast. Music cue # 20 transportation to The Palace. The lights change and we are there. Music cue # 21 the death of The Beast. The Narrator enters and gestures toward the wings. Two Grotesques enter carrying a bier upon which reposes the dying Beast. Beauty rushes to him.)

Oh, no! Dear God, I am too late.

BEAST *(faintly)*

Beauty?

BEAUTY

You are alive.

BEAST

You've made me wait
So long, my Beauty.

BEAUTY *(to the Grotesques)*

Set him down.

(She kneels beside the bier, weeping bitterly)

BEAST *(fainter still)*

Don't cry.

BEAUTY

You are so strong, my Beast. You will not die.
You are too brave for Death.

BEAST

Oh, no.

BEAUTY

It's true.
Death is a coward. He is no match for you.

BEAST

I thought you forgot.

BEAUTY

How could that be?

BEAST

I am . . . a stupid Beast. Please . . . pardon me.

(Death is very near. The Grotesques kneel at the head and foot of the bier. They bow their heads. The Narrator bows his head. The music fades.)

BEAUTY

Why is your voice so weak? Where is that roar
To startle and astonish me once more?

BEAST

It's just a whisper now.

BEAUTY

I'm very near.
Speak to me, my Beast. Beauty will hear.

BEAST *(with much difficulty)*

I'll beg a brief reprieve from eager Death
To say I love you with one final breath.

(He dies in her arms. She sobs, uncontrollably.)

BEAUTY

Dear God, don't let him die and never know,
With all my heart and soul I love him so.

(Beauty sobs. She rises from the bier and moves away. Slowly the lights begin to change. Music cue # 22 the transformation of The Beast. The bier is blanketed with a light which grows brighter and brighter. The music builds. The Grotesques remove the shell-like outer costume of the Beast and lift away his final mask to reveal a radiantly handsome Prince. The Prince rises. The bier is removed from the stage by the Grotesques. A third Grotesque enters with a golden crown. The Prince kneels and is crowned. He rises and turns to Beauty. Slowly, Beauty turns to see him smiling at her.)

BEAUTY *(bewildered)*

Where is my Beast?

BEAST

My Beauty, I am he.
No longer prisoner of that vanity
Which cursed my face and form 'til I should find
One gentle heart whose love was pure and kind,
And who might shed one tear of grief, at least,
Because she loved a simple, ugly Beast.

(He kneels before her)

I love you, Beauty. Will you be my wife,
And let me share this love with you for life?

(The Prince rises. He takes Beauty in his arms and kisses her. It is a long and loving kiss. He picks her up in his arms and very slowly carries her upstage as the Narrator crosses downstage to ease us back into reality.)

NARRATOR

Our story's ended now, but as you see
They'll live "Forever after, happily".
These tinselled dreams we've conjured for tonight
May fade tomorrow in a brighter light.
We pray the subtle magic of our spell
Will linger even after this farewell . . .
And that the measure of you smile's increased
By this, The Masque of Beauty and The Beast.

*(Lights and music fade as the production dissolves into the ether.
Music cue # 23 The curtain call.)*

The End





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